

employee notifies a clerk or the like at the shop  
of the transmitted instructions to make various  
arrangements for inventorying, as required. If the  
inventory employee is unsuccessful in performing  
5 operations with respect to an inventory of the object  
commodities referring only to images of the selling  
areas, the inventory employee requests a clerk at  
the selling areas to perform minimum operations,  
which the inventory employee cannot perform from  
10 a remote place, thereby surely making an inventory  
of the object commodity using the inventory computer  
50A or 50B, or the mobile information terminal 50C.

The use of the telephone line 60 as a  
communication means allows a part-time employee to  
15 inventory the object commodities. For example, a  
company which intends to inventory object  
commodities requests the part-time employee to  
inventory (count) the object commodities over the  
telephone. After that, the part-time employee  
20 connects the inventory computer 50A, or a terminal  
(such as a mobile information telephone) which  
serves to function as the mobile information  
terminal 50C, to the control computer 10A installed  
at the shop via the telephone line 60 to obtain images  
25 of a selling area where the object commodities to  
be inventoried are placed. The part-time employee  
makes an inventory of the object commodities with

reference to the obtained images of the selling area.  
Since part-time employees that can perform inventory  
taking are easily found and hired, it is possible  
to eliminate the need for employees of the company  
and clerks at the shops to work as inventory employees,  
thereby greatly reducing the cost of inventorying  
the object commodities.

If the company owns a multiple of chain shops  
located worldwide, the company installs the  
inventory computer 50A at a remote place in a  
different time zone where some of the shops are  
located and hires employees or part-time employee,  
who live in the remote place, as inventory employees.  
This enables the employees or the part-time  
employees at the remote place to inventory the object  
commodities while it is night in the time zone in  
which the stores are located, and it is day in the  
remote place where the inventory computer 50A is  
located. One advantage is that inventory taking  
performed during the daytime is less costly than  
inventorying performed during nighttime. A further  
advantage is that it is possible to hire inventory  
employees in areas or countries where labor costs  
are.

(A-4) Configuration of the camera section:

The TV camera 20A and the camera positioning  
device 21A, which are installed in a shop in the

tele-inventory system 100, will now be described with reference to FIGS. 4A and 4B. FIGS. 4A and 4B are perspective views respectively showing a camera section of the tele-inventory system 100.

5 In FIG. 4A, the TV camera 20A capable of zooming in/out on an object of which an image is to be taken is mounted on a pan/tilt mount 21a of the camera positioning device 21A. The pan/tilt mount 21a is controlled by the camera controller 13A and the motor driver 15a in such a manner that the position and the posture of the TV camera 20A that takes an image of a selling area is remotely controlled.

10 The zoom-in/out operations of the TV camera 20A are directly controlled by the camera controller 13A, as mentioned above. A security camera previously installed in the shop may also serve as the TV camera 20A, which is used as shown in FIG. 4A. Conversely, the TV camera 20A that is installed for the tele-inventory system 100 may be also used as a security camera.

15 In the example of FIG. 4B, the camera positioning device 21A is composed of linear-motion rails (axial of screws) 22a, 22b, 22c and sliding (nut) members 23a, 23b, 23c, which elements are fixed to the commodity shelf 80.

20 The linear-motion rails 22a and 22b are fixed respectively along the top and bottom horizontal